



Children's Corner

The Many Benefits of Messy Play

Childhood is supposed to be messy. Children learn by exploring the world with all of their senses. To touch something is the way they learn about objects. Hands-on experiences with a variety of materials is crucial for their learning.

If parents feel uncomfortable with the mess, tell them "the dirtier your child gets at school, the better reader they will become."

Yes, messy materials can be a challenge for teachers. But there is a huge difference between children making a mess (which they certainly can do) and children getting messy. Children learn from getting messy and with the right water/sand table, bins, and drop cloths, you can use these materials to provide a wide variety of learning experiences for children of all ages. Soap and water clean it all off at the end of the day.

What exactly do children learn from getting messy?

Cognitive Development

Messy play focuses on process rather than product. As children explore different materials, they work on problem solving, curiosity, and decision making as they decide how to use the materials. They make observations and hypotheses. They learn math concepts such as grouping and matching. They learn science concepts like cause and effect (What happens if I....?), states of matter (solids and liquids). Their vocabularies grow as they use new words to describe what they are experiencing. Discovery is a creative process.

Social and Emotional Development

As children work together to explore materials, they enhance their social skills. They learn to cooperate and take turns. They listen to each other's ideas and express their opinions. They feel good about themselves, as they become competent learners. As children explore, they gain the confidence to try things they have never done before. This will later translate to the school setting. For example, the world of reading — sounding out letters and words they've never seen — could seem daunting unless children have had positive experiences stretching themselves, gaining confidence, and growing through

Physical Development

Children develop their small motor skills "while pouring, measuring, stirring, whisking, and manipulating the materials. They enhance their eye-hand coordination. They learn to control their bodies and give their bodies directions to accomplish tasks as they explore."

(http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=227)

Get messy with -

Water, Sand (dry and/or wet), and Dirt (dry and/or wet)
Paint, Fingerpaint, Glue, and Paste
Sawdust and Wood chips
Cornstalks, Leaves, Twigs, and other Nature Materials
Playdough, Clay, and Silly Putty
Goop (cornstarch and a little water)
Whipped Cream
Ice cubes (add food coloring) and snow
Plain Gelatin molded in bowls or molds
Water sprinklers

Add -

Funnels and sifters
 Different kinds of bowls, containers and buckets
 Colanders
 Cardboard tubes and straws
 Squeeze bottles
 Rocks and pebbles

	Develops hand-eye co-ordination	Physical Development	Builds fine-motor skills	
Teaches about sequencing and patterns		Improves body control, poise, balance and co-ordination		Explores colour, shape and texture in two and three dimensions
Mathematical Development	Offers opportunities for counting, measuring and sorting		Use of different media and material fosters imagination	Creative Development
Develops the concepts of size and shape				Focus on process over product enables individual interpretations
Encourages representational play and story-telling				Informal context encourages confidence in communicating
Knowledge and Understanding of The World	Enables risk-taking and experimenting in a safe environment		Provides exposure to a rich and varied vocabulary	Communication, Language and Literacy
Teaches cause and effect		Fosters children's natural curiosities		Provides opportunities for mark-making
	Encourages a positive attitude to new experiences	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Builds independence through choice	 <small>play, explore, create, learn</small>

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